

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM
HELD ON TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2015 FROM 7.00PM TO 8.40PM**

Present:-

Local Education Authority Representatives:

Ian Pittock

Diocesan Representatives

David Babb (Chairman)

Parent Representatives:

Phiala Mehring (Vice Chairman)

Representatives from the Local Community

Early Years Forum

Arborfield Garrison

– Other Faith Groups

Schools Representatives

Elaine Stewart – *Aldryngton Primary School*

Also present:-

Sue Riddick, School Admissions Lead Officer

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement

Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer

11. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 2 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Beth Rowland, Local Authority, Celia Thatcher, Grazeley CE Aided Primary, Maggie Seagrove, Oakbank School.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Phiala Mehring declared an interest in Item 16 – Admission Arrangements for Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies for 2016/17, on the grounds that she is a Governor at the Forest School, and is part of the Admissions Committee.

14. OFFICE OF THE SCHOOLS ADJUDICATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Forum received and considered a copy, of the 2013/2014 annual report made by the Office of the School's Adjudicator's (OSA) to the Secretary of State as set out on Agenda pages 7 to 62.

Sue Riddick explained that the report is written in light of the information received from Admission Authorities in their annual returns of the admissions process for the academic year 2013/14.

The main findings as summarised on Agenda pages 5 and 6 were highlighted. It was noted that most of the criticisms were related to own Admission Authority Schools. One of the main issues was that many own admission authority schools do not seem to be aware that they have to formally determine their admission arrangements every year, even if no changes are proposed. Local Authorities are being encouraged to 'police' this and report to the OSA if it is not happening. This requirement is clearly set out in the Admissions Code, and compliance with the Code is part of the Academies' Funding Agreement.

Another area for improvement was the requirement to include more and easily accessible information relating to 6th Form admissions on schools' websites, and to set an Admission Number for external applicants. Sue Riddick indicated that she would be raising awareness of this with schools in the Borough, through the Education News.

In paragraph 54 and 55 of the Report, the comments made by the Schools Adjudicator about giving priority to siblings in oversubscription criteria, confirm the stance taken in Wokingham. In Paragraphs 57 and 58 it is reiterated that in relation to 'starting school for the first time', schools must offer full time provision from the beginning of term; there should not be an induction period where the number of sessions for attendance are dictated by the school. Sue Riddick said she would pass this onto schools.

Comment was made that although the Report highlights areas where there is none compliance with the Code, there appears to be no sanctions taken.

In relation to the comments made in paragraph 56 that priority should not be given to those in particular nursery provision, this has been superseded by the new provision in the revised 2014 Code, which introduces such a provision in certain circumstances.

RESOLVED: That the 2013/14 Annual Report of the Office of the School Adjudicator be noted.

15. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES FOR 2016/17

The Forum received and considered the copies of the admission arrangements submitted by the following voluntary aided schools and academies:

- The Forest School
- Maiden Erlegh School
- The Piggott School, including the Charvil Piggott Primary School
- St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Sue Riddick mentioned that all other Voluntary Aided and Academy/Free schools were not consulting on any major changes to their admission policies/arrangements. She then went through her comments on the submitted arrangements that she would be passing on to the schools to ensure that their policies/arrangements were clear and complied with the mandatory requirements.

Additional comments were made by Forum members as follows:

Forest School:

- Designated area maps should be available as part of the policy on schools' websites, not just a reference to the Council's website;
- In the 'In-Year admissions to Years 7 to 11' section, suggest add a reference to the special arrangements for Year 10 entry;

- Check that the deadline for accepting/ declining a place match with the Local Authority deadlines.

Maiden Erelgh School;

- In oversubscription criterion 3 it would be better to say that a sibling who 'is expected to be at the school' rather than 'will be at the school'.
- In the 'In Year Admissions to Years 7-1' section, it should say that the admission number refers to Year 7, with there being 278 places available in other years.

Piggott School

- Designated area maps should be available as part of the policy on schools' websites, not just a reference to the Council's website;
- There should be a note that if parents ask for their child to be allocated a place outside their normal age group, the right of appeal does not apply if they are offered a place at the school, but it is not in their preferred age group.

St Teresa's

- A definition of Looked After Children should be included;
- In the Oversubscription Criteria Section there should still be a reference to children with statements, as it is possible not all will have been converted to Education, Health and Care Plans.
- The ***footnote defining 'practising' in other faiths should not refer to being a 'member of that Church', as some faiths do not consider themselves as 'members of a church'.

RESOLVED: That the comments made by the Local Authority on the admission arrangements submitted by voluntary aided schools and academies be noted, and forwarded to the Schools concerned with the addition of the above comments made by the Forum.

16. NEW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CODE – UPDATE

The Forum received and considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 111 to 114 summarising the changes made by the Department for Education to the School Admissions Code. The revised Code came into force on 19 December 2014, so the changes should be included in published admission arrangements for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That the update on the new School Admissions Code be noted.

17. DRAFT GUIDANCE ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN OUT OF THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL AGE GROUP

The Forum received and considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 115 to 124, detailing proposed guidance on the placement of children to work out of their chronological year group.

Sue Riddick said that the guidance was being developed for schools, early years settings, local authority officers and parents, to give a consistent approach, and help parents to understand the implications of requesting an placement out of chronological age group. It will incorporate the Department for Education's recently issued advice on the admission of summer born children. Head teachers will be consulted.

RESOLVED: That the draft guidance on the education of children out of their chronological age group be noted.

18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS.

The dates for planned future meetings of the Forum up to 2016 be noted:
10 March**, 9 June, 1 December 2015 and 27 January 2016.

However as there had been no consultation on the Local Authority's Admission Arrangements this year there was no need to have the planned meeting in March which would have considered the results of the consultation.

** It was agreed that the 10 March meeting be cancelled.

At the next meeting on 9 June the items for consideration will be:

- The Authority's annual report to the Office of Schools Adjudicator
- An update on the own admission authority determined admission arrangements
- An update on the primary and secondary allocations
- Consideration of any changes proposed by the Local Authority for 2017/18 admissions.

19. URGENT BUSINESS

New Schools opening in September

Mention was made that the sponsors appointed to run the new secondary school in Arborfield and the two new primary schools in Wokingham and Shinfield, would have to decide whether they want to be part of the coordinated admissions scheme for their first year of opening. There is information in the Parents' Guide

Amendment to the 2016/17 Coordinated Arrangements for Primary Admissions Scheme

Sue Riddick circulated a copy of the wording that would be used in the 2016/17 Coordinated Arrangements for Primary Admissions Scheme, to amend the Section 3 – Timing of entry to Primary Education, in light of the recently issued guidance from the DfE and the revised School Admissions Code. The wording of the three new paragraphs will replace the last paragraph of the section.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the School Admissions Forum

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